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MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 2, 1962

TO: The Vice President

FROM: Colonel Burris

RE: Soviet Concern Over Cuba

Although Soviet officials apparently did not anticipate some of the reactions which their latest moves in Cuba have precipitated, they have recently become deeply concerned over the situation. Most of the concern, which is felt especially by Khrushchev, appears to stem from Soviet interest in the fundamental aspect of the Cuban experiment.

Certain Soviet officials, including Khrushchev, have revealed that the primary aim of Soviet policy in Cuba is to prevent a liquidation of the Castro regime since Cuba has been chosen as an example to Latin American countries that a Communist regime can survive in this hemisphere. The Soviet Union is determined to support and defend such an operation. The challenge to the Monroe Doctrine is implicit although in the Communist philosophy and jargon the operation is labeled defensive in nature. One of the dangers, therefore, is the clash of the prestige of the Soviet Union in this experiment with the prestige of the United States in defending traditional policies of the hemisphere.

In the absence of incidents, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the Soviets would go in open military support of the Castro regime. Khrushchev has made it clear that any attempt to blockade Soviet ships would be ignored by the Russians, and he has warned that he would use Soviet submarines and other military power to guarantee Soviet passage of the high seas. In the event of conflict between the United States and Cuba, the Soviets have threatened to come to the aid of Cuba. Russian soldiers have not been mentioned, although materiel and equipment have been promised the Cubans for use against U.S. attack bases, communications centers, etc. Yet the Soviets realize fully that the Cuban experiment could possibly involve major elements of U.S. military power and therefore lead to a much broader conflict. Since the Soviets still have a high regard for U.S. nuclear power, as well as a knowledge of the destruction which might eventually be delivered upon Russian soil, they may for these reasons exercise care and restraint in Cuba but limited only by the necessity for the Communist experiment in Cuba to succeed.

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By ing, NARS, Date 4-26-81

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